The second preparation for war was the much discussed equipment of an expedition to invade England. It is a commonplace of history that the British empire has ever been fortified in the separation of the kingdom from the continent of Europe by a narrow but stormy estuary. There had been repeated invasions from the days of the Anglo-Saxons themselves down to the expedition of William of Orange; but growing wealth had furnished ever increasing armaments, and made access to England's shores so much more difficult with every year that, finally, successful invasion had come to be regarded by her enemies as impossible. On the other hand, the English remained skeptical, and fell into periodic panics on the question. Even now a clever fiction like the "Battle of Dorking," or a revival of the project for tunneling below the Channel, can awaken such anxiety as to insure the passage of any grant for strengthening the navy. This distrust was well known to the French. For years the project of a descent on England had been the standard pretext of the Convention and of the Directory to extort money from officeholders and patriots. This inheritance was exploited by the First Consul to its full value. In general his preparation was doubtless a feint, but there were probably times when the scheme commended itself as an alternative. He told Whitworth that there was but one chance in a hundred of its success; he never seriously tried to execute it; and in the -undiplomatic but apparently sincere effusion of October twenty-third, to Otto, the whole stress of his argument is laid on the chances of continental conquest.

Nevertheless he made enormous outlays of money. Boulogne was the spot nearest to England which was available for the gathering and drill of a mighty force. Thither were summoned to form an Army of England